I Ain't Gonna Wait For Godot, No More

By Doug Holder

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To my late wife Dianne Robitaille, who was my inspiration.....

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I ain't gonna Wait for Godot No More

To Samuel Beckett and Bob Dylan

He's a half hour late,
and when the rooster crows
at the break of dawn
I'll be gone….
I will sport my battered bowler
I will do a sprightly, Vaudevillian shuffle
and continue to stumble
on this earthly floor.
I will take comfort with friends
the golden stare of my ginger cat
a wet lick of a chocolate truffle
and take my time going
to that so distant shore…
"I ain't gonna wait for Godot, no more."
There is some vague sense of promise
in the breeze,
he may have something to say
that I will adore
an insight to my plight,
but I won't sit still
and wait for his chill…
"I ain't gonna wait for Godot, no more."

Am I Real?

sometimes
i wonder.
i feel
like the mist
a transitory ghost
that dissipates
into the ether
a trail of vaporous
cigarette smoke
i feel
like an empty
glass
among cups that
runneth over
when the clouds
roll in
i want to join them
i want to billow
far above
and far away...

Krapp's Last Tape

based on Samuel Beckett's play

I am the widower
who stares at
framed pictures
and talks to ghosts.
I am an aging man
who hears
voices
in the
cracks
of the floorboards.
I am "Krapp's Last Tape"
a spool
that is constantly
rewound to
a fleeting moment
when her eyes
opened and
she let me in.

Hamlet at the Yiddish Theatre

For Lloyd Schwartz

Sometimes they just want to yell at him
this poor man's Laurence Olivier
"Get a job!"
through his thick
existential fog.

"Such tsuris!
"Enough already!"
at his dramatic angst
"You think you
had it hard!"
"To Be or not to Be"
"If that is the question
then make a decision,"
they say with derision.

A father,
might have yelled
as mine did to me,
You'll be a drifter!"
A luftmensch
well at least
I would be free!

Some mother
might have espoused
a maternal cliche
“You are 30 years old
you have your
whole life ahead of you.”
And this Yiddish Hamlet
might retort:
“And that’s the problem
My whole
life is ahead
of me.”

When it is all over
then the fat lady
sings.
and
sings.

A Balloon with the Artist's Own Breath

(From a New York Times article about a museum exhibit)

On the museum wall
appointed
next to a
well-hung
gray
duct-taped banana
the artist's
mission statement
his heated breath
confined in plastic –
swirls of sputum
particles of modern
postmodern
conceptual
are in a slow,
threatening cloud.

And it is best
that it is contained
midst the refined,
patrons'
nuanced breath
It is best
to be deaf.

My Computer wants to 'Verify if I am human'

This is what my computer tells me –
Is this an insult, or rhetoric that it spews?
An ontological question,
Coming from some fuse

Sometimes during
my dark night
of the soul
I wonder
If I am embodied
or an ethereal ghost
But the morning light
Streams in my faith
From the bedroom window
yet again.

The computer has
A nefarious rotating circle
That surrounds my visual plane....

I check my pulse
I feel the flesh and blood,
The flashing synapses
Of my brain,
The crooked life lines
That are traced on my hands.

The circle stops
its maddening cycle...
The cold metal and steel
Pulsates with judgment
And gives me redemption
After the many years I have prayed

I have been saved....

Chicken Coquettes

They are such flirts….

shaking their ample
rumps and breasts
a ruffle
of come hither feathers
pecking out a mating song
their twisted gams
in a spastic dance.
Of course
they will
eventually become
a placid, gravy-laden
chicken croquette
taken in the mouth
by some ravenous
spouse
or perhaps
a discerning
mouse.

Gentrification

Maybe not seeing the sun's
rise and fall
because of the damning exclamation points
of concrete towers
is not important.

The world should
have a dark predator's
shark's grin.
everything is a flash
in the pan
anyway.

Wipe away the old brick
and cobblestone
the sawdust from the wooden
floors from the corner pub.

Let the battalions
of bulldozers
and Mack trucks
wipe the slate clean.
Look out of your
luxury condo
to the asphalt Alzheimer's
of a parking lot.

And,
There is not one errant stain
on your stainless steel
Kitchen....

Sciatica

Suddenly at 67
an alternating current
swept my leg with pain
perhaps a prelude
to a walking stick
a twisted cane.

Am I in a new
'walk' of life?

Maybe
a limping
gimp
in a dirty black overcoat
that dogs bark at
or children break from play
and run away...

A grim totem of shooting pain
on the winding road
that leads, perhaps
to a performance
of taps....

Listening to Etta James sing "At Last"

At last
The discordant threads
Will be woven.
The tattered
Will be tangled
Into each other….
And the moon
Will finally bust
And burst
Through the nocturnal
Sky
And the black birds
Will suddenly sing
And fly.
What you have seen
Will finally be seen.
What has slipped
Through your spidery fingers
Will now stick to you….
And the universe
Will envelop
You.

I Will Wait For You *

sunflowers
gold petals
a bit of
haberdashery
for a bluebird
of happiness
whose heart
and no doubt,
feathers,
in a flutter
to be swept off
by her angel-winged
lover.

** inspired by a painting by Gieseke Penizzotto Denise*

House Dust

for Denise Penizzotto

At night
I shed my dead skin cells
in the morning
in the mirror
I say a Kaddish
for their dust.

Dust floats in my home
bombs of pollen
on the promise of a
fragrant spring air.

I try to sweep it
it all
under that tatters of a
Persian rug
but it spindles around
an old forlorn chair
always looking
for a grave.

At times
I see a shaft of afternoon light
the dust
a funnel
of flowing detritus
streaming to the heavens.

God's hands
are full
of dust...

She is a curator of sunsets

a self-appointed guardian of the beach
so she picks the immortal pellets
like polluted pearls
poseurs among the sea shells,
pecked up by
wobbling seagulls.
These birds have
a gut feeling
their heads swivel
in a chaos
of bulging eyes
heavy with
the detritus of
careless lives.
Even the lust
of the flies
have been fooled
as they perch
on plastic
and search desperately
for a kiss of
blood.

Elegant and Eternal

On my COVID night
trembling like a drunk
on detox
my shirt soaked
in sweat
clung to me
like a skin
to keep me intact.
It was then he came to me-
a snake oil salesman
a man appointed in plaid
and polyester
with a wide, hateful smile
gave me his fever dream,
Crazy Eddie sales pitch
"Elegant and Eternal,
Elegant and Eternal."
What was he selling?
a casket,
an urn
or perhaps
a bill of goods
straight to the
inferno

At the diner: A slice of life

The gaudy Las Vegas chorus line of rotating cakes
Sweet. Seductive. Lethal.
And Buffalo's wings
How I wish I could
See them fly.
My mouth's intercourse
breathless chanting, 'oh cheeseburger! oh cheeseburger! oh cheeseburger!
Oh... Don't worry we use condiments
I think I really saw
A fisherman eating his platter
The steak gives me 'tips'
"Slow down on the red meat," it pleads...
I want to grill
The grilled chicken
What do you suggest
Breast or thigh?
And the political correctness
Of the tri-colored pasta
Oh, my darling
Sweet-sweet potato fries –
Oh, don't fret
there is always feta...
Perhaps a haddock
Bake or fried
and the eternal question,
"What will be my side?

A Clean Well-Lighted Place

** inspired by Ernest Hemingway's short story*

All I want is a clean
well-lighted place,
perhaps the silhouette of a tree
shadowing my face.
A beer so dark
and deep
it loosens the secrets
that I keep.

The polished bar
gleaming with Mahogany
serenity.

No music
to break the spell,
a table,
an old man
before he faces
the Stygian kiss of
the night
where he
dwells.

Signs

(for my late wife Dianne Robitaille)

A fallen autumnal leaf
perfectly lands
in the template of my hand-
I almost crushed it
with my wet sorrow..

A sudden red bloom
on a dying geranium
a crown
for us brittle leaves
below.

When I close
my eyes
cameos of her smile
flicker
on my
very black screen,
like an old silent
movie.

The sudden
wide-eyed-shock
of the cat
tail erect--
pointing to the ceiling
to some shadow
some trace of a spectral
being.

The bird
that I could only see
when I laid my head on

her pale, deflated stomach
flickering with
frantic flight...

I felt the warm wind of the lake
gently sweep her away
I saw her
once more
in the mournful
davening
of the trees.

Tragic Cardigan

Now it's time
To let your paunch
Lay low
In your
Grandfather's sweater.

Take off the tight
Italian leather shoes
Surrender to
The ratty
vagrant slippers.

You are febrile
In your frumpiness.

You try to muffle
The invective
In your head,
"Old Man — shake a leg!"
And you would
If it wasn't so
Painful.

Now put enough pens —
Perhaps a pipe or two
The overdue phone bill
Gnarled pencils in its
Deep, sagging pockets

Perhaps sip a well-timed
Scotch
And disappear
On a wave
With
Miles Davis.

Don't worry
No one will
Notice…

My Father with Jack Dempsey*

On my table
is a picture of my father with Jack Dempsey
outside the Brill Building in New York City.
Dad's narrow black tie
his jet back hair
tamed by an oil slick of Vitalis
his left hand clenched in a fist
a pugilist meeting another pugilist.
Dempsey pretends to yell something in my dad's ear
like Ali to Cosell, a graceful athlete
to the Jewish Ed Sullivan posture of my PR man father.
My father didn't seem to be living in the moment
he was always not here and nowhere.
Now he is frozen in a frame.
I will never understand him.
He said he didn't understand me.
Now we just stare at each other
wordless
desperate to connect.

** Jack Dempsey was a famous heavyweight fighter.*

I AM A LEPER

I wear a pristine
white mask
to cover my contorted face
my hands covered
in clenched fists
of tight blue
plastic.
People swerve
from me
in the street,
wide arcs
for six feet
of shelter
from the storm.
I play Hollywood Squares on Zoom
framed portraits of friends
a museum of distress–
talking helps…
gallows humor does
the rest.

Just Before…

the fourth gin and tonic
and lime
when fragments
can still be put
in a narrative line
when the tremor
in my hand
is still
for a short
time.

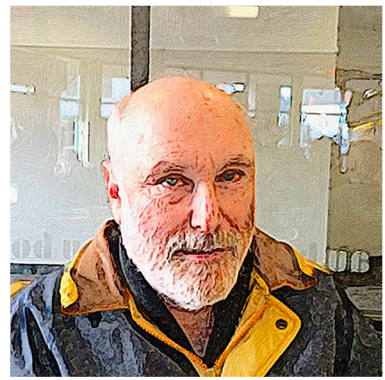
And all these stumble bums?
Well –
they are
all pals of mine!
Now –
wouldn't
that fourth drink
be a bloody
crime?

At the Atrium at the Boston Public Library

I sit in limbo
between both worlds
looking at the perpetual
ejaculation of
the fountain
under a shock
of blue sky
in a gap
between wings
old and new
a pause from
the confluence
of past and present
watching the ivy
grip the
old edifice
the clouds
drift
shadows flit
on the pavement
casual and transient.

Still I know
I can only
walk from old to new
that the brittle tomes
will decay
so I
will sit
and pause
for just
this day

Biography



Doug Holder is the founder of the Ibbetson Street Press, arts editor for *The Somerville Times*, and on the Board of Directors for the New England Poetry Club, as well as the Friends of the Longfellow House. Holder teaches creative writing at Endicott College, and taught college writing at Bunker Hill Community College for many years. For over 30 years he ran poetry groups for psychiatric patients at McLean Hospital and was the president of Stone Soup for one year. (late 1990s). His poetry and prose have appeared in the *Lowell Review, Worcester Review, Rattle, Cafe Review,* and many other places. The "Doug Holder Paper Collection" is housed at the University at Buffalo. His latest book is *The Essential Doug Holder*(Big Table Books)